

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL ASMARA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 012773

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS

SUBJECT: PROPOSED MEETING WITH PLF LEADER OSMAN SABBE

REF: (A) STATE 5951 (NOTAL); (B) STATE 6754; (C) STATE
7003; (D) DAMASCUS 127; (E) ADDIS 14968 (NOTAL)

1. IN LIGHT OF AP REPORT OF INTERVIEW WITH ERITREAN PLF
LEADER OSMAN SABBE (BEING REPEATED DAMASCUS BY SEPTTEL),
REPORTED ELF/PLF SUMMIT IN DAMASCUS (REF D), AND RELEASE
JANUARY 9 BY ELF OF TWO AMERICAN CAPTIVES, WE BELIEVE IT
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MIGHT BE USEFUL FOR USG REPRESENTATIVE TO SEEK MEETING WITH

SABBE TO DISCUSS PLF CAPTIVES, STEVEN CAMPBELL AND JAMES HARRELL. UNLESS AN ADDRESSEE PERCEIVES OBJECTION (WHICH SHOULD BE CABLED IMMEDIATE TO DAMASCUS AND DEPARTMENT), EMBASSY DAMASCUS SHOULD ATTEMPT TO ARRANGE SUCH MEETING IF SABBE STILL IN DAMASCUS. WE LEAVE TO EMBASSY'S DISCRETION CHANNEL FOR MAKING THIS APPROACH AND SELECTION OF EMBOFF OR OFFICERS TO MEET WITH SABBE.

2. DURING MEETING EMBOFF SHOULD CONFINE HIS INQUIRIES AND COMMENTS TO THE FOLLOWING:

(A) NOTE AP REPORT.

(B) INQUIRE RE CURRENT MENTAL AND PHYSICAL STATE OF CAMPBELL AND HARRELL AND AS TO PROSPECTS FOR THEIR RELEASE.

(C) NOTE THAT RELEASE OF BOWIDOWICZ AND STRICKLAND BY ELF JANUARY 9 GENERATED CONSIDERABLE PUBLICITY FAVORABLE TO ELF. (DEPT SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT ON RELEASE BEING CABLED DAMASCUS SEPTTEL.) POINT OUT THAT CONTINUED HOLDING OF INNOCENT AMERICANS DOES NOT HELP PLF CAUSE.

(D) URGE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF HARRELL AND CAMPBELL AS WELL AS MICHALKE, WHO IS REPORTEDLY BEING HELD BY ELF.

(E) IF SABBE INQUIRES RE USG'S REACTION TO THE REPORTED DEMAND OF CAPTORS THAT USG PROMISE TO TERMINATE MILITARY AID TO ETHIOPIA STATE THAT THE MATTER OF MILITARY AID TO ETHIOPIA IS A MATTER EXCLUSIVELY BETWEEN THE US AND ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENTS.

3. EMBOFF SHOULD FEEL FREE TO DRAW ON STRICKLAND/BOWIDOWICZ STATEMENT AS DESCRIBED IN REFS (B) AND (C), AS APPROPRIATE IN COURSE OF MEETING. KISSINGER

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